DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 229 674 CG 016 644

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TITLE Delinquency Level Classification Via the HEW Community Program Youth Impact Scales.
PUB DATE Aug 82
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association (90th, Washington, DC, August 23-27, 1982). For related document, see ED 225 067.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Classification; *Delinquency; Delinquency Prevention; Human Services; Interpersonal Relationship; *Predictive Validity; *Predictor Variables; Secondary Education; *Social Networks; Youth; Youth Problems; Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Impact Scales; National Strategy for Youth Development

ABSTRACT

The former HEW National Strategy for Youth Development (NSYD) model was created as a community-based planning and procedural tool to promote youth development and prevent delinquency. To assess the predictive power of NSYD Impact Scales in classifying youths into low, medium, and high delinquency levels, male and female students aged 10-19 years (N=1,561) completed self-report questionnaires. Analyses of Impact Scales data with subjects self-reported delinquency (SRD) data showed that 58.2% of the sample were correctly classified. The results strongly supported the predictive validity of the Impact Scales for correctly classifying the general population of youths sampled into low, medium, and high levels of delinquency. Results also indicated that the most potent predictors of delinquency level were social relationships rather than educational and occupational access variables. The data suggest a dilemma, since human service agencies have tended to pour resources into programs aimed at areas which appear unlikely to reverse the tide of crime and delinquency; yet broad programmatic intervention in human relationship variables most associated with delinquency (i.e., friendship and family networks) would be strenuously resisted on moral and civil grounds. (WAS)

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Delinquency Level Classification via the HEW Community Program Youth Impact Scales

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CG 016644

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Paper Presented at the Annual American Psychological Association Convention, August, 1982, Washington, D.C.

Abstract

HEW youth development community program Impact Scales measuring peer pressure, social alienation, negative labeling by significant others, and self-esteem were successively extracted via discriminant function analysis allowing for 58.2% correct classification of 1,516 males and females, ages 10 - 19 years, into three delinquency levels. Youth perceived access to educational and occupational roles were not predictive. Implications are discussed.

Delinquency Level Classification via the HEW Community Program Impact Scale*

The former HEW National Strategy for Youth Development (NSYD) Model was created as a community-based planning and procedural tool to promote positive youth development and prevent delinquency. This strategy involves the assessment of youth needs, the development of youth needs targeted programs, and program impact evaluation (Elliott, Ageton, Hunter, & Knowles, 1976). Pennsylvania Youth Services Systems have employed HEW community program model since 1977 (Lombardo, 1977; Truckenmiller, Skok & Lennon, 1978). As an operational procedure for data-based planning in community youth program development, it is uniquely predicated on a model of youth behavio that incorporates requisite measures of the model's components. Of the many assessment tools employed (a problems and needs frequency and seriousness checklist; Impact Scales; Knowledge of Agencies Questionnaire; and a demographic information section), the Impact Scales most directly reflect the NSYD behavioral model. Acceptable reliabilities (Brennan & Huizinga, 1975), substantial predictive validity (multiple R≥.70) with respect to Self-Reported Delinquency (SRD) (Brennan & Huizinga, 1975; & Truckenmiller, 1980 - Note 3), and consistent structural validity with respect to obtained correlation patterns occurring in predicted directions (Brennan & Huizinga, 1975; & Truckenmiller, 1979, Note 1, Note 2) have been found for the Impact Scales.

The behavioral model is one wherein mutually reinforcing components press toward and interact with positive youth development on the one hand, or delinquency on the other. In the positive direction, a sense of general societal belonging, youth perceived access to desirable social roles, youth

perceived positive labeling by significant others, and youth perceived positive peer group pressure are all synergistically reinforcing with positive, nonproblematic behavior. In the negative direction, alienation, perceived lack of access to desirable social roles, perceived negative labeling by significant others, and perceived negative peer group pressure are all mutually reinforcing with problematic and delinquent behavior. Figure 1 shows the synergistic press of variables towards and away from delinquency in the HEW Youth Development Model.

Twelve Impact Scales measure these major components. The alienation component is tapped by the Impact Scales Normlessness vs. Conformity, Powerlessness vs. Control, and Societal Estrangement vs. Societal Integration. Perceived labeling by significant others is reflected by three

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Insert Figure 1 about here

Impact Scales: Negative vs. Positive Labeling by Parents, by Teachers, and by Peers. Another Impact Scale, Parental Rejection, might logically be grouped with the negative labeling scales. Impact Scales Perceived Access to Educational Roles and Perceived Access to Occupational Roles are measures of the perceived access to desirable social roles component. The three remaining Impact Scales are: Normative Peer Group Pressure (negative), Self-Esteem, and Self-Reported Delinquency (SRD). The purpose of this study is to assess the predictive power of the former HEW's National Strategy for Youth Development model community program Impact Scales for classifying youth into low, medium, and high delinquency levels.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 1,561 males and females, ages 10 - 19 years old, who comprised a 6% systematic random sample of youth in schools in one county of a multi-county demonstration project.

Materials

Materials consisted of the HEW Impact Scales administered as part of the Youth Needs Survey Questionnaire (Elliott et. al., 1976) given in the Pennsylvania Youth Services Systems demonstration project (Lombardo, 1977; Truckenmiller, Skok, and Lennon, 1978). Data was collected by administration of self-report questionnaires with proctors on hand to help with any questions. Confidentiality was maintained by use of respondent identification numbers rather than names.

Analysis

Subjects were divided into high, medium and low delinquency levels on the basis of their SRD scores. Cut points were set at +.5 and -.5 SRD standard deviations from the group mean. A step-wise discriminant function analysis of Impact Scales vis-a-vis low, medium, and high delinquency levels was then run.

Results

Table 1 shows the Impact Scale means for low, medium, high and all group delinquency levels. Table 2 gives the corresponding standard deviations. Table 3 shows the percent correct and number of cases classified via BMDP jack-knifed classification into low, medium, and high delinquency levels. The Impact Scales show good utility for correctly classifying youth into low, medium, and high delinquency levels. Overall,

58.2% of the sample were correctly classified with 70%, 41.4% and 72.6% of the cases rightly falling into low, medium, and high delinquency level classifications. There was only 6% misclassification into high contrast levels.

Insert Tables, 1, 2 and 3 about here

The significantly discriminative variables in order of their predictive contributions were: Normative Peer Group Pressure [$F(2,1558)\approx308.757$], Normlessness [$F(4,3114)\approx186.076$], Negative Labeling by Parents [$F(6,3112)\approx139.978$], Negative Labeling by Peers [$F(8,3110)\approx109.706$], Self-Esteem [$F(10,3108)\approx89.535$], Societal Estrangement [$F(12,3106)\approx76.198$], Negative Labeling by Teachers [$F(14,3104)\approx66.252$], and Parental Rejection [$F(16,3102)\approx58.895$]. Conspicuously absent were Perceived Access to Educational Roles and Perceived Access to Occupational Roles.

Discussion

The results strongly support the predictive validity of the HEW Impact Scales for correctly classifying the general population of youth sampled into low, medium, and high delinquency levels. These results also add to the accumulating support for the predictive and construct validity of the HEW model. (Brennan & Huizinga, 1975; Truckenmiller, 1978, Note - 1, Note - 2; Truckenmiller, 1982.)

What seems clear from these results is that social relationship variables rather than educational and occupational access variables are the most potent predictors of delinquency level in a general youth sample. Such a finding is rather striking, especially given that the greatest proportion of studies extracted in a 1981 ERIC literature search by this author dealt

with educational and occupational variables as major factors in the development and maintenance of delinquent behaviors. While the importance of educational and occupational variables cannot be denied (Figueira-McDonough & Selo, 1980; Glaser, 1979; Kelly, 1977; Skornia, 1977; Noblit, 1976; McCandless et. al., 1972; Vocational Foundation, Inc., 1978; Portland State Univ., Oreg. School of Urban Affairs, 1977; Bayh, 1977; Caplan, 1974; Toby, & Toby, 1961), for example, these seem rather minor when gauged against the impact of human relationships found here, in another Pennsylvania county sample (Truckenmiller, 1982), and in a much larger multi-county Pennsylvania sample (Truckenmiller; 1982). This contrast between the relatively greater importance of human relationships in comparison with educational and occupational access factors in the treatment of criminal behavior, generally, can be further exemplified by reference to the following studies. With respect to educational variables, Rabinowitz et. al., (1978) found no relationship between the quality of vocational education at seven institutions and the post-release adjustment of adult offenders. Sabatio (1974) likewise found little relationship between vocational and educational programs and juvenile post-release adjustment for the vast majority of studies examined. The Canadian (Ontario) Standing Committee on Health, Welfare, and Science (1978) concluded that both school difficulties and delinquency arise from adverse family influences and that improving school performance in and of itself would be unlikely to lessen antisocial behavior. On the side of positive human relationship variables impacting delinquency, Jenkins et. al. (1979) found participation in family counseling to be the most predictive factor in reducing juvenile recidivism; and Dawes (1976) found the normative reference groups of youth, followed by parent-child relationship factors to be

most predictive of delinquent behavior. Experience at the Loysville Youth Development Center suggests that positive human relationships are critical to the success of educational and vocational programs. Here, the youth have consistently cited factors such as teacher trust, care, and personal interest as crucial to their progress here when compared to their repeated and protracted failures in the usual public school structure.

In this writer's view, as social scientists attempting to apply research results to pressing social problems, and as members of a society that stresses freedom of choice and individual rights, we face something of a dilemma. We have been prone to pouring vast resources into programs targeted at areas which it appears are unlikely to reverse the rising tide of crime and delinquency (Riedel & Tornmberry, 1975; Robinson & Smith, 1971). Yet, the idea of broad programmatic intervention in the sorts of human relationship variables most associated with delinquency, such as friendship and family networks, would be strenuously resisted on moral and civil grounds. At the heart of this dilemna is a philosophical contradiction built into our society's belief systems. While our moral and legal structures are based on the ideas of free will, choice, and personal responsibility, our scientific structures, which we as human service professionals also attempt to apply, are based on the ideas of natural determinism, prediction, and control, let alone understanding. It is in the crucible of criminal justice and delinquency prevention that these barely miscible systems and their implications for action meet. Here they do so with uneasy and shifting mutual accomodation, and little resolution in sight.

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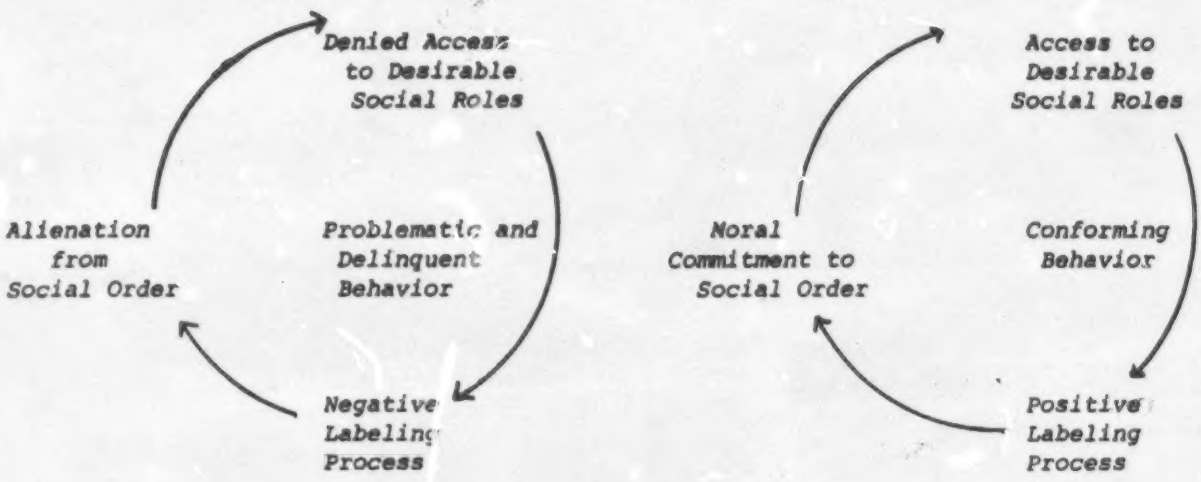
Denied Access to Desirable Social Roles
Problematic and Delinquent Behavior
Negative Labeling Process
Alienation from Social Order
Access to Desirable Social Roles
Conforming Behavior
Positive Labeling Process
Moral Commitment to Social Order

Figure 1 - *The synergistic press of variables towards and away from delinquency in the HEW Youth Development Model.*

Table 1

Impact Scale Means for Low,

Medium, High, and All Delinquency Levels

	Groups			
Variables	Lowdel	Middel	Hidel	All
Nrmlss	11.042	12.811	14.780	12.623
Socest	37.423	39.500	40.969	39.073
Control	35.010	34.153	32.656	34.124
Accea	10.719	10.367	9.860	10.379
Accop	13.829	13.311	12.668	13.352
Labpar	13.705	16.127	21.226	16.395
Labtch	13.388	16.745	22.372	16.805
Labper	13.985	17.630	22.167	17.350
SRD	19.930	24.323	34.563	25.033
Slfest	29.960	29.876	29.084	29.732
Nrmppr	12.375	14.552	17.845	14.513
Parrej	7.824	8.698	10.079	8.695
No. Subjects	547	671	343	1561

Table 2

Impact Scale Standard Deviations

for Low, Medium, High and All Delinquency Levels

	Groups			
Variables	Lowdel	Middel	Hidel	All
Nrmlss	2.737	2.526	2.495	2.600
Socest	6.386	5.997	6.310	6.204
Control	4.053	3.985	3.960	4.003
Acced	1.337	1.327	1.471	1.363
Accop	2.145	2.347	2.631	2.346
Labpar	4.878	5.552	6.450	5.543
Labtch	5.860	6.598	7.575	6.583
Labper	5.109	6.019	6.286	5.780
SRD	.809	1.914	6.096	3.156
Slfest	4.576	4.581	4.740	4.614
Nrmppr	2.947	3.391	3.185	3.196
Parrej	2.213	2.546	3.076	2.565

Table 3

Percent Correct and Number of Cases Classified via BMDP Jackknifed Classification into Low, Medium, and High Delinquency Groups.

			Group		
Group	Percent Correct	Group Totals	Lowdel	Middel	Hidel
Lowdel	70.0	547	383(70%)	131(24%)	33(6%)
Middel	41.1	671	218(32.5%)	276(41.1%)	177(26.4%)
Hidel	72.6	343	22(6.4%)	72(21%)	249(72.6%)
Total	58.2	1561			